

## ANSWER TO LORD VANSITTART

Dear Lord Vansittart,

Some time ago I received your *Lessons of My Life*. The Germans should be grateful to you for having written this book. Throughout a lifetime you were, behind the scenes, the soul of Germanophobia in England. In this book you have put your cards on the table. The result is an encyclopedia of Germanophobia containing every imaginable argument against the Germans. Although you are not the only one in the world who hates the Germans, there is hardly anyone who has made such a profession of this feeling as you have. Since your early youth you have attracted every anti-German argument like a magnet, and in this book you have got everything off your chest that you had accumulated in "forty years of silence," as you put it.

This seems to be a particularly suitable moment to discuss your book. The Declaration of Yalta only becomes fully intelligible when read in conjunction with it. This is hardly astonishing; you yourself have emphasized your close connections with Churchill. And your close connections with the British leading class are revealed by your career. The son of a family which immigrated from Holland in the seventeenth century, you have spent the sixty-four years of your life as a typical member of English society. You went to Eton. You traveled. You entered the Foreign Office where, bright young man that you were, you became secretary to the Foreign Minister and private secretary to the Prime Minister—sure steps on the path to political prominence. You wrote essays and light plays. You made two socially prominent marriages. You were knighted, and since 1930 you held the key position of the entire British foreign service, that of Permanent Undersecretary of State. Although you disagreed with Neville Chamberlain, Churchill persuaded you to remain until 1938. Then you retired from the Foreign Office and were given the title of Chief Diplomatic Adviser, which had been specially created for you. The reason you yourself give for your retirement is: "I went when there was nothing left that I could do with bound hands, but much that I could do and had to do in freedom." What you meant was your exten-

sive activity as a publicist, which has culminated in *Lessons of My Life*.

I must ask you in advance to forgive me if I am not quite exact in my quotations from your book. Unfortunately I am not in possession of the original; all I have is a Swedish translation, so that I am obliged to translate your words back into English, without ever hoping to be able to match your highly-praised style. (The page numbers given also refer to the Swedish edition.) The best thing would be, of course, for the readers of this magazine to form their own idea by reading the book themselves. At first I thought of publishing an English translation of the Swedish edition—as far as I know, the only copy of your book existing in East Asia. But I dropped this idea again, as I did not want to get into a copyright conflict with you and also because your book can hardly appear under the sponsorship of *The XXth Century*, its mentality belonging so obviously to the nineteenth century. I believe you will agree with me that the quintessence of your ideas is correctly summarized as follows:

England and the world is fighting not only the Nazis but Germany as a whole. There are no good Germans, and if there should be a few they are of no account. Indeed, even those Germans whom many people call "good" are bad, because the character of the whole German people is bad. Mistakes made in past history by other nations must not be cited to excuse Germany. On the contrary, the German people must be re-educated in a severe process lasting some fifty years.

What makes your book interesting is that it is not just one more of the countless anti-Hitler books, but that it is directed against the German people as a whole. Hence I shall concern myself with your anti-German arguments.

### "NAZIS" AND GERMANS

One of the sharpest controversies between Hitler and his enemies at home and abroad was the following. While Hitler declared that all Germany stood behind him and that the National Socialists and the German people

were one, his opponents alleged that he had been forced upon the German people: by the capitalists, as some said, by the *Junkers*, the military, etc., as others would have it. Your book shows that you fully agree with Hitler on this point, a fact which must be rather embarrassing to you. Even Hitler has hardly laid more emphasis on the unity existing between the National Socialists and the German people. You have even taken over his racial theory. In your opinion the Germans are by nature burdened with a special kind of original sin; they are "gangsters" (p. 46), "barbarians" (p. 83), "an international plague" (p. 100), "Huns" (p. 158), "not like other people" (p. 212), "predatory" (p. 231), "criminals" (p. 314), and you support a "theory of destiny" according to which Hitler and the second world war are not a coincidence but phenomena deriving logically from Germany's fate.

The reason for this attitude of yours is quite clear. In the very first chapter you proudly assert that you are anti-German and have hated the Germans since your youth. You tell how, toward the end of the nineteenth century—you were born in 1881 and still in your teens at that time—you went to Germany and how your distaste for everything German originating from that visit has never been wholly understood by your countrymen. (In other words, even the hatred felt by the English for the Germans during and after the Great War was not enough for you.) Time and again you had to hear from some of the more reasonable of your compatriots that the Germans were not as bad as you made them out to be. All your arguments—this is the sorrow of your life, which threads its way through your book—did not enable you to convince your countrymen, to the extent which you desired, of the wickedness of the Germans.

Now finally, after forty years of frustration, you feel your chance has come. Hitler's policy has brought him many enemies: world capitalism, the Bolsheviks, the Jews, the representatives of the *status quo*, to name but a few. In large parts of the world, the machinery of propaganda was running full strength against him. Gradually an atmosphere of hatred was built up against Hitler which reached its culminating point in the course of the present war. You had looked on with displeasure at the way in which this hatred was at first concentrated on Hitler and the National Socialist Party; so, not as the only one but probably as the most prominent, you presented the world with the thesis that the hatred of Hitler should be a hatred of all Germans. For, you declared:

"The Germans stand united behind Hitler." (p. 46)

"Even if Hitlerism were to be swept away, the Germans will not change." (p. 251)

"We are at war not only with Naziism but with the German nation." (p. 276)

And you arrive at the conclusion:

"Hence I solemnly accuse the German nation, men, women, and even the growing generation—with a few honorable and impotent exceptions." (p. 314)

The day on which the Yalta communiqué was published must have been the happiest of your life. For it has adopted your basic theory—accusation of the whole German people and the necessity for its radical re-education.

Well, the last word has not yet been spoken.

#### "THE GOOD GERMANS ARE BAD"

In order to support your theory, you must prove that all Germans are bad, even those who are regarded as good by some of your countrymen, as, for example, the Leftists, the Church, and the intellectuals. Although you direct your attacks from different angles, they all end up with the same reproach: all these people, you say, are first and foremost Germans and only secondarily Leftists, Catholics, etc.

You begin your "unmasking" with a bon mot: "There are decent people in Germany, but when you want to find them they are always out" (p. 29). That is, of course, tough luck for you. But isn't it possible that you went to see the wrong people or that you came on purpose at a time when they could not possibly be at home? It is a pity that you do not give any details in your book about that fateful journey to Germany of your youth. It might have proved interesting to submit these details to psychoanalysts, who are known to be of the opinion that, in the case of some people, the impressions received during adolescence leave pathological marks for the rest of their lives, especially if, after forty years of "repression," they can only be abreacted at the age of sixty. You must tell us one day what happened to you at that time in Germany. Did some uncouth German withhold the submissive respect which you have come to expect from the ordinary people in England? Or did you happen to be in Germany at the time of the Boer War, when many Germans felt indignation at the attack of the vast British Empire on that small people? If that should be the case, all one can say is: On what coincidences does human life depend! Had you happened to have been in Holland or Russia at that time, you might, because the Boer War was condemned in the same way there as in Germany, have been a hater of Holland or Russia all your life, instead of a Germanophobe.

#### THE LEFTISTS

Well, so the German Leftists are bad. (How embarrassing for you that you agree again with Hitler on principle, although not in your reasoning!) They are bad, so you say, because they are nationalists and regarded both the Great War and the present war as defensive wars, instead of speaking out against them

and sabotaging them.

As for the Great War, you are mistaken. At that time there was among the German Leftists—in contrast to those of other countries—an important group which wished to sabotage the war from the very beginning; it had, however, to move cautiously at first, as the large majority of the workers did not adhere to their views. As early as August 1915, 44 members of the Reichstag expressed their disapproval of further financing of the war; and in July 1917 the Reichstag voted with 212 against 126 votes in favor of a peace without annexations, while England and France continued the war for a peace with annexations. From 1917 onward, the German Leftists instigated strikes and mutinies and contributed largely to the collapse of November 9, 1918. Thus if you compare the attitude of the German Leftists during the Great War with that of the English Leftists, you must admit that the Germans were far more opposed to the war and far more effective in sabotaging it.

On the other hand, it is hardly surprising that the rest of the German Leftists, just like all the rest of the people, should have regarded the Great War as a defensive war. Without wishing to discuss the events leading up to it, we need only mention that there are enough books, including English ones, which ascribe the guilt for the Great War to all nations concerned or which name Germany in fifth place in the list of guilty nations, after Russia, Serbia, Austria, and France. Of course, it would be futile to discuss this with you. However, even you will admit that the Great War was subjectively felt to be a defensive war by the great majority of Germans. And if, with the exceptions just mentioned, the Reichstag granted the necessary credits for the war, it did so because it was convinced that the war was being waged in Germany's defense. This fact is not altered by some aggressive voices in Germany which, moreover, were not raised until the Germans had, in the course of the war, conquered territories at great sacrifice—including the lives of many working men—and the Allied plans concerning Germany became from day to day clearer and more threatening.

Conditions in Germany during the first fifteen years after the Great War also contradict your thesis. There was no other country in the world outside the USSR where the Communists had as many adherents as in Germany, and you must agree that the Communists throughout the world conduct their policy not primarily in the interest of their own country but upon orders received from a certain foreign country.

And what was the situation in 1939? At that time there no longer existed any Leftist group as such in Germany. But let us assume that you include in your term the one-time Leftists and the working class as a whole.

How could these people regard the war of 1939 as anything but a defensive war? Was not war declared upon Germany by England and France on September 3, 1939? Did not even the spiritual headquarters of the Leftists, Moscow, sanction Germany's eastern policy of 1939 by its treaty with Hitler of August 23 and by its participation in the partition of Poland? Since then, you and the likes of you have done everything to impress every German, even the ex-Communist, with the fact that the war is being waged on the entire German people, including himself.

With your good knowledge of English history you undoubtedly know that the British Leftists did not sabotage even outright British wars of conquest. And in 1914 and 1939 the German Leftists had far more reason to look upon the war as a defensive war than the English. For in both cases it was England who declared war on Germany without the slightest act of aggression having been committed against England by Germany.

#### THE CATHOLICS

The Christians in Germany are also nationalistic, i.e., bad. "The German Center Party [the political organization of the German Catholics 1871-1933] and its bishops were, like Luther and the Lutherans, first and foremost Germans." (p. 216)

Excuse me for contradicting. There were quite a few Catholics in Germany who were first and foremost Catholics. The hard domestic struggle Bismarck fought in the seventies and eighties and in which he had finally to admit defeat was directed at this very attitude, at the "ultramontanism" which looked for spiritual authority to Rome and not to Berlin. While the Church in France insisted on a certain amount of autonomy since the *Declaratio cleri Gallicani* of 1682, and the Russian Church had its own supreme head since the election of a Patriarch in 1589, the German Catholics have always been strongly dependent on Rome. If you really want an example of nationalistic Catholics, you should study the history of the Polish Catholic Church.

But let us, for argument's sake, assume you to be right. What is the consequence? What do we find in other countries? Do not clergymen everywhere bless the arms of their own country's armies, no matter what kind of a war it may be? Did not the Anglican Church even go so far as expressly to sanction bombing raids on civilians? You will reply that you cannot compare these things, as England is waging a good war and Germany a wicked one. Arguments of that kind merely lead into the sphere of subjective emotions, where it is useless to try to continue an objective discussion. However, if you are of the opinion that the English clergy is supporting the English armies because it considers the English cause a just one, you

must not blame the German clergy for an identical attitude. To accuse a Catholic leader like Bruening of having fought as a captain in the Great War is grotesque. He did nothing but what millions of "good" Englishmen did.

#### THE PROTESTANTS

You do not like the German Protestants either :

Luther taught obedience toward authority, whether it was good, bad, or terrible. Between spiritual and political freedom he drew a line which has led to all kinds of abuse. One must never, either in word or action, resist earthly tyranny, he declared Naziistically. Any such attempt should be choked in blood. One should not even mutter." (p. 214)

And approvingly you quote Emil Ludwig :

"Luther gave the temporal princes the spiritual weapons Charlemagne had taken from them . . . By consolidating the Protestant princes in a position of power which their forefathers had merely usurped . . . he laid the foundation stone for the idea of "throne and altar," of the priest behind the throne, of the clergyman appointed by the *Junkers*." (p. 215)

If you did not possess such a one-track mind intent upon looking at Germany through dark glasses, you would have noticed that a connection between state and church exists in other countries as well. Simultaneously with Luther's Reformation in Germany, you will recall, another one took place in England. By the "Act of Supremacy" in 1534, King Henry VIII made himself "Protector and Only Supreme Head of the Church and Clergy of England." Those who would not acknowledge this were executed, among them Sir Thomas More, one of the finest Englishmen of that time. "By breaking the bonds of Rome Henry did not give the church freedom; he substituted a single despotism for the dual authority which pope and king had previously exercised over it." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., Vol. IX, p. 447.)

There was no question of any opposition against "earthly tyranny" or even of mere "muttering" against state authority for your countrymen of those days. You will find that confirmed in any English history book. If Luther was "Naziistic," what are we to say about Henry VIII? You might object that Henry was a king, not a religious reformer. Very well, then you should take a look at what Calvin taught about obedience to the state (if not necessarily to the king) and at the intolerance he preached.

And as for Emil Ludwig's and your reference to the "clergymen appointed by the *Junkers*," I have before me a standard textbook on English history written by Cyril E. Robinson of Winchester College, which has the following to say about the Church of England (p. 308) :

It was the only possible religion for a gentleman; and it is small wonder that, whatever his personal convictions, the average squire [the English equivalent of a *Junker*] embraced it with enthusiasm. Nor did his zeal go unrewarded. In the little village kingdom of the countryside the Church was the squire's most valuable ally. The parson, who in most cases owed

to him the bestowal of the "living," was, in all matters sacred and profane, his right-hand man. Seldom of gentle birth, often ill-educated, nearly always miserably poor, the rural clergyman was little better than a menial to the man at the big house; toadied him and flattered him when invited at rare intervals to dinner (knowing his place well enough, moreover, to rise and take his leave as soon as dessert and wine appeared upon the table); lent a hand with his accounts; rearranged his library; tutored his son and helped to get in his hay-crop; and, above all, backed him through thick and thin, alike in parish politics and in the pulpit. The result was that the squire was regarded by the parishioners as a more authoritative spokesman on matters of religion than even the parson himself.

Since you have only studied Luther to find material for your anti-German arguments, you naturally did not notice that Luther's attitude toward state authority served not to glorify the state, much less to support an egoistic despotism such as Henry VIII's, but was motivated by entirely different reasons. Luther was so utterly convinced of the holiness of God that in his eyes God's authority stood supreme, worldly authority being a matter of secondary concern. With a severity unaccustomed since the days of early Christianity, Luther emphasized the difference between divine and temporal matters. Profoundly stirred by the divine nature of God, he freed the Church and its servants from participation in worldly affairs, in which they had been deeply enmeshed. And in turning their attention to the sphere of the soul, he emphasized the responsibility of the earthly powers for the political, social, and economic order on earth :

One is God's realm, the other is the world's realm. . . . We must carefully distinguish between these two dominions and leave them both: one that converts, the other that brings about external peace and prevents evil doings. Neither is enough without the other in the world. Wherever worldly dominion or law rules alone, there can only be vain pretense, even if it were to appear alike to God's own commandment. And wherever clerical dominion rules alone over country and people, wickedness is unleashed and the barriers let down for all knavery.

#### TERRIBLE ACCUSATION

Your wrath is directed not only at Catholics and Protestants separately but at German religious feeling as a whole.

Since 1914 Germany has dealt [the religious feelings and morality of the world] a blow from which they have not yet recovered. . . . The Germans were the first to declare war, secretly at first, then openly on Christianity, which they could no longer reconcile with their own *Anschauung*. They even robbed us of our, though partial, at least to a certain extent consoling substitute, the illusion of automatic progress. . . . The moral destruction inflicted upon the world by the Germans is irreplaceable. (p. 202)

That is a terrible accusation—if it is true. In the introduction to your chapter on questions of religion, you admit frankly that you are not an expert in these matters. Please do not be offended if I ask you: do you consider yourself a religious person? There is little in your book to indicate this; and when you write, "We have lost faith in the supernatural"



(p. 201), one must assume that the "we" includes yourself too. By the manner in which you discuss religious questions and compare religion with "intravenous injections" (p. 200), you give the impression of being an intellectual who approves of a harmless, not too costly, and at the same time useful occupation for the "people." If, indeed, you are a person to whom religion is of no great value, it becomes you ill to accuse the German people of being antireligious.

By asserting that you are not an expert in religious matters, you have provided yourself with a certain alibi. But since you write, "I like people to say what they think, even when they say something I don't approve of" (p. 209), I shall avail myself of your kind permission to tell you that your chapter on religion seems very confused. For, while you passionately denounce the Germans for having exerted a pernicious influence on England's religious life since 1914, you depict the conditions obtaining before 1914 as being sorely in need of reform:

In my childhood, Sundays were something terrible and boring. No amusements were permitted. We were compelled to go to church twice and to listen to sermons lasting half an hour. At Eton we had one service on weekdays and two on Sundays. The ritual became a punishment. . . . And what a ritual it was—and still is! . . . During my lifetime the Church has done little to encourage my going to church, and it is not entirely the fault of youth that . . . it "is sparing and hasty with prayers". . . . It was, for instance, very stupid to implant in me such an obvious anachronism as a literal hell. . . . Not even boys believed what they were taught. . . . Considerable changes in the ritual and certain changes in the doctrine may become necessary. . . . It is high time that certain conceptions and methods no longer suited to modern needs were modified. (pp. 203-226)

And as for your reproach that the Germans have deprived the world of that consoling substitute for religion, the illusion of progress, I need not even go into the question whether this is true or not, since you yourself speak of the idea of progress as an illusion, i.e., as being unfounded.

#### REBIRTH?

"Will there be a spiritual rebirth?" (p. 200) you ask, a question which, so you say, is frequently put in England. And you reply: "I am sure I do not know exactly what religion ought to be like, apart from the fact that it should have a more reasonable content than a number of the dogmas which we have been about to lose for so long now." (p. 201)

If you yourself do not know what is to become of religion in England, I would like still less to interfere in the affairs of your own and England's spiritual rebirth, although I agree with you that both are desirable. After all, what you are concerned with is not so much England as Germany. But in Germany that spiritual rebirth for which you are seeking is already taking place. That which displeases you in German religious feelings is precisely

that very process of spiritual rebirth in a people which is not content with the mere repetition of old dogmas or with church services of the type which you yourself describe as a punishment.

The Germans have tried, you declare ironically, to make Christ into a blond warrior (p. 277). It is true that there are people of that kind, just as there were Dutch painters in the Middle Ages who gave Christ the features of their own people and the clothes of their own time. But are there not also in other nations religious groups or sects which appear ridiculous to other countries or even to their own countrymen? You need only think of the "British Israelites," who seriously believe and try to prove that the English are the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and are hence called upon to rule the world. You have not grasped the essential point of all the—serious or ridiculous—movements in Germany's religious life, within or outside of the traditional church: that they are the expression of a vigorous and profound urge toward the spiritual rebirth you are hoping for.

#### POLITICS AND MORALS

The next step in your argumentation is: while the Germans have been base enough since Luther to separate politics from morals, the English unite both harmoniously. Again, I am afraid I must contradict you. As regards England, you are confusing moral politics with politics wearing a cloak of morality. The latter kind are met with far more often in England's past and present history than the former. No other country is so intent upon justifying its political actions to itself and the rest of the world by giving them a veneer of morality. When the English attacked the Spanish colonies in America, they did so to "punish" the Spanish, who allegedly cut off one of the ears of the English smuggler Jenkins; when they wished to take away France's colonies in America, they had to "because France was the foe of mankind and her flag must be blotted from the seas"; when they waged war upon the Chinese to force them to buy their opium, they fought for the "equality of nations"; when they conquered India, exploit her, and refuse her freedom against the will of the majority of Indians, indeed, even against the counsel of their own allies, they call it "the white man's burden"; and when it seems that Germany is growing stronger than they care for, they "hasten to the aid of the Poles." Are those moral politics? No, the English have always done exactly what they wanted to do; only that they never admitted this, doing their utmost instead to let their actions appear outwardly moral.

You base your attack against the immoral nature of German politics on the notorious words about the "scrap of paper" with which Bethmann-Hollweg referred in 1914 to the Belgian treaty of neutrality in a conversation

with the British Ambassador, when Germany demanded the right to march through Belgium. The official British documentary publications (Vol. VIII, No. 311) have meanwhile revealed how lightly the English themselves took the treaty of neutrality. Let me quote an impartial American historian, a professor of Princeton University :

The invasion of Belgium [by Germany in 1914] was branded the greatest crime in history. A crime it certainly was, but treaties had been broken before and they have been broken since 1914. In time of war every nation violates international law in the name of national necessity. The German plan of campaign had contemplated the invasion of Belgium ever since the beginning of the century. Invasion was thought to be necessary in order to attain speedy success. The eastern frontier of France was mountainous and heavily fortified; Belgium and north-western France were flat and moderately fortified. To deal a stunning blow at France, in time to check Russia, Belgium must be invaded. The plan was an open secret. . . . During the Boulanger crisis [1887-89] the British had shown a disposition to permit Germany to cross Belgium. From that time until 1914 no British statesman affirmed the determination of England to protect Belgian neutrality. . . . The extent of German guilt is debatable. The extent of German stupidity was colossal. When nations break treaties they find excuses; excuses can always be found. Bethmann did not make excuses. He admitted Germany's guilt and in his agitation used the expression "a scrap of paper." A more terrible blunder no statesman ever made. What he said was known to statesmen. Even Lord Salisbury once publicly referred to treaties in similar words, but not during a crisis. Bethmann's words clung to Germany like the taint of leprosy and did the German cause incalculable damage. The paradox is that these words were spoken by one of the few statesmen who tried to act with the same regard for honor in public life as he did in private life, a statesman too honest to deny having used the words, as he might easily have done.

Indeed, the English should have erected a monument to Bethmann-Hollweg; for his "colossal stupidity" presented the British Government with the moral excuse they were looking for. In reality, "England's decision to make war on Germany was made before that country invaded Belgium. The British Government only used that incident to secure popular support for its action," as a recent American university textbook on history put it.

In connection with the "scrap of paper" quotation, you coin the witticism that Germany made a paper hunt of its words of honor (p. 282). In view of your attitude it would be useless to repeat here the reasons which on several occasions forced the German Government to regard treaties as violated by the other partner and hence invalidated. But tell me, what has become of British words of honor? Of the Balfour Declaration? Of the promises made to the Indians and Arabs? Of the guarantee to Poland? Of the Atlantic Charter?

We all hope that one day the most noble laws of personal morality will prevail in politics, too. But that will only be possible if all states subject themselves to these laws, instead of England, or the Big Three, declaring everything they themselves do to be moral and everything

that does not suit them to be immoral.

#### THE INTELLECTUALS

In your attack upon the representatives of German culture, you employ a double argument. The first is: German culture is by no means worth all it is claimed to be, the only exception being German music, but this, too, only during the course of two centuries. About German science you have such charming things to say as "Germany engaged hordes of pimps of the type of Professor Lenard [Nobel Prize winner 1905] in her cultural brothels" (p. 184). I need not waste words over this argument. German culture and science require no defense. Nor do I wish to argue with you over whether English literature, Dutch art, or Italian science have really contributed more than the German, whether Voltaire had "a greater heart than Goethe," or whether "Goethe only had seven-league boots, but Shakespeare wings."

On the other hand, I cannot let your second argument pass. For, since there are some German cultural achievements which even you are unable to deny, you assert: Whatever is good in German culture is either not understood at all by the Germans or misinterpreted and distorted. Let me quote what you have to say about Schiller :

A lot of nonsense has been indulged in as regards Schiller. In the eyes of foreigners he appears as a humanist, as an enthusiastic upholder of human rights and individual liberty. . . . That is, however, not the impression one gains as a German or when one reads him in German. There the emphasis is far more on the nationalistic vein. (p. 181)

What you write here is not true. No matter where Schiller is read—apart, of course, from the Vansittart library—he is always the same: a cosmopolitan filled with the highest ideals of humanity, and at the same time a true representative of his people, which happened to be passing through a hard trial during his lifetime. In the worst days after Versailles I was a pupil of the upper classes of a typical German *Gymnasium*, and I can tell you from my own experience that Schiller was held up to us both as a European and a German and that in school performances we declaimed Marquis Posa's demand "Sire, grant freedom of thought!" as enthusiastically as we did the Rütli oath "We shall be one single nation of brothers." You are equally mistaken in what you write about the lack of understanding in Germany for Goethe and his cosmopolitan ideas. Instead of wrapping yourself in an atmosphere of hatred for Germany, you should have paid a visit during any early summer of the twenties or thirties to Weimar, where year after year thousands of students met at the Goethe and Schiller celebrations and made pilgrimages to the places where they had lived and worked to express veneration for these two great Germans and Europeans. I know, you came to Germany for a short time in 1936, not to

see and learn but—as you say yourself—to counter the reproach that you had not seen modern Germany with your own eyes.

After having unmasked the allegedly good Germans one after another in all their baseness—the Leftists, the Church, the intellectuals—you direct your attack toward the German people as a whole. Your book contains a long list of their bad qualities. By enumerating them you wish to prove that the Germans are full of innate wickedness and should therefore be treated accordingly by the rest of the world. Permit me a few brief comments.

(1) "THE GERMANS ARE NATIONALISTS"

Although you do not trouble to define your interpretation of the word "nationalism," it is clear that it stands for something very wicked. If I am correct in my assumption that you mean an overemphasis on national feelings, I must admit that you are not entirely mistaken in your observation. It is true that, during the last 150 years, nationalism was more strongly emphasized in Germany than, for example, in England. But here I would like to draw your attention to a false conclusion: this was done not because German national feelings were stronger but because they were weaker than in England. Since the early beginnings of their history, the English have led an existence geographically isolated from the rest of the world; and for centuries they have been accustomed to being the masters over subjected colonies. Hence they take their being English and their superiority complex for granted. The German people, however, was knocked about by its neighbors from the late Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century and did not manage to achieve political union until quite recently. Even after the completion of the outer process of unification, the domestic one continued on. Numerous were the obstacles on the path of outward and inner unity: petty sovereigns jealously guarding their rights; Prusso-Austrian rivalry; a particularism resulting from five hundred years of petty states; and, above all, neighboring states seeking for egoistic motives to prevent the process of unification. All this made unity a cherished political dream rather than a matter of course for the German people. A sick man speaks more about medicine than a healthy man; and in a people which is on the way from hundreds of petty states to becoming a united nation, more emphasis will be placed on nationalism than in another which has possessed this unity for many generations.

The fact that a certain amount of intolerance is connected with this cannot be denied. People advancing along a threatened path toward a common goal react more vehemently toward reluctant or hostile elements in their own ranks than people who have long attained this goal and are accustomed to regarding it as a safe

possession. Any people which found itself in a situation similar to the German one behaved in a similar way or even more violently; take the young Baltic states which, between 1919 and 1939, sought to justify their existence to the world as well as themselves; take particularly the Polish state when it had been created anew with many non-Polish elements after long years of partition.

(2) "THE GERMANS ARE MILITARISTS"

By militarism you obviously mean a spirit that regiments a nation by a surfeit of discipline in order to prepare it for war. Well, as far as discipline is concerned, I agree that it is strongly emphasized in Germany, a fact which is incomprehensible to many non-Germans and alarms them because of the influence of people of your type. But the emphasis on discipline among the Germans has its psychological and historical reasons. A nation that is so overindividualized and consists of such self-willed people and, above all, a nation compressed into a limited space in the center of a restless continent, must, if it wants to exist, replace by discipline what it lacks in freedom of movement in the wide open spaces.

In England's public life, far less regimentation is noticeable because centuries of insular education have already resulted in a far-reaching spiritual regimentation of the people. Yet when England felt threatened in 1940 she militarized the entire nation; she put hundreds of thousands of women into uniform and was even proud of it. The experience of her own history, however, has forced Germany much more often to regard herself as threatened and to demand the discipline of a besieged fortress within her borders.

You complain that Germany places too high a value on might. But what else was she to do after she had to find out time and again, particularly during the twenties, that in politics there is as yet no right without might? Take the case of Austria. Both the Germans and the Austrians were one in their desire for union; and with few exceptions the rest of the world also agreed that Austria could not, after the loss of the greater part of her possessions, be rehabilitated without union with Germany. When, however, thirteen years after the Great War, so modest a project as the Austro-German customs union was to become effective, it foundered on the hysterical opposition of some of Germany's former enemies. But hardly did Germany have an army again a few years later when the union was brought about quickly and without a single shot being fired. As long as there is no international court of appeal which impartially dispenses justice and sees to its being carried out—unfortunately the world is still far from possessing it, since even your postwar plans merely provide for the dictatorship of certain great powers—the country



without might is at the same time without right. The Baltic states, Poland, and Iran found this out again during the last few months.

The Englishman may seem less militaristic than the German. But the Englishman lives on an island guarded by a vast fleet in a permanent state of preparedness. He can afford to manage without a large standing army, for in case of war he always has enough time to make the necessary preparations—or at least he had it, before the airplane was invented. Germany never had it. Surrounded by strong and often unfriendly neighbors, she was obliged to keep a strong army permanently in readiness.

### (3) "THE GERMANS ARE AGGRESSIVE"

It is correct that the Germans were involved in six wars in the course of the last 130 years. Two of these—the two world wars—have already been discussed elsewhere in this letter. As for the Boxer Rebellion, the English also participated in quelling it. What remains are three wars lasting altogether twenty-one months which the German people conducted in the years 1864/71. Among them the war of 1866 was an internal German affair, which you should approve of as Germans killed each other off in it. The other two, the war against Denmark in 1864 and that against France in 1870/71, were not waged for the conquest of foreign territory, as were, for example, the wars of Louis XIV and Napoleon, but for the unification of the German people. Whatever territory was acquired in Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine as the result of these two wars had already belonged to Germany through long periods of history and was inhabited in large parts by Germans. Wars are ugly in themselves; but if there is such a thing as a justified war, it is one in which a nation fights for its unification.

England's unification is the result of a long series of wars, beginning with the dawn of British history and lasting up to 1746, or even longer if you count Ireland. The fact that these wars of unification seldom brought England into conflict with the rest of Europe is not due to your own merit but simply the result of your insular position. Accordingly, it must be hard for you to see things through German eyes and to grasp the fact that on her road to unity Germany had constantly to reckon with intervention from abroad.

Many regard it as a proof of German aggressiveness that in 150 years the German armies stood four times on French soil (1814/15, 1870/71, 1914/18, 1940/44). But the first time it occurred in reply to Napoleonic aggression (and arm in arm with your own country), the second and fourth times as the result of France's declaration of war. As regards the third instance, let me remind you of the words of General Buat, one of the leading French generals. He said that in 1914 France, although she had

only 38 million inhabitants, had more soldiers and arms than Germany with her 68 millions.

If the Germans are really so militaristic and aggressive, it stands to reason that they must have conquered a lot of territory in the course of their long history. But while the British flag waves over 35,000,000 square kilometers—more than a quarter of the land surface of the globe—inhabited by hundreds of millions of non-English people, Greater Germany of 1939 possessed only 680,000 square kilometers with a purely German population, except for a few million Czechs who had belonged to the German or Hapsburg empire from the Middle Ages up to the Great War. If we judge by these standards, nonmilitaristic England has been far more successfully aggressive than militaristic Germany.

I have before me an interesting book, *Our Lords and Masters*, which appeared in 1935 in the (Jewish) publishing house of Simon & Schuster in New York and which has the following to say about the "historical myth" of German aggression:

Until recent times Germany was Europe's favorite battle-ground, the real cockpit for those "World Wars" which recur about once every hundred years. . . . On German soil was fought the terrible Thirty Years' War which reduced the country to polygamy and cannibalism. Louis XIV and his successors invaded Germany, repeatedly, and so did Swede and Austrian and Englishman. Napoleon made Germany his favorite battle-ground and forced it to taste the bitterness of defeat and foreign occupation. . . .

The German people were divided under many different rulers and were used by their powerful neighbors in Austria and France—and England—not to mention Russia, much as the modern Balkan States are used today. . . . After the battle of Waterloo, Germany kept the peace more scrupulously than any of her neighbors. Austria, France, Russia and England could, and did, engage in fighting all over the map. Germany waited fifty years and then, after three short, sharp wars [1864-1871], put an end to Austrian and French meddling in German politics. . . .

When German shipping and trade competed successfully against British shipping and trade and when Von Tirpitz constructed a Navy to defend German commerce, England acted as though the Great Beast of the Apocalypse was loose again. For nearly fifty years after the battle of Sedan, Germany again kept the peace—while England again fought wars all over the map, Russia conquered much of Central Asia and France created a great colonial empire—yet the world was never allowed to forget that Germany was a monster of militarism.

So much for military aggression. But in your opinion the Germans are the disturbers of Europe's peace par excellence. You are right: there are among the German people such elements as Luther who have brought unrest, if a creative one, to Europe. But there are others too. Whenever the West passed through a period of crisis in its history, there were Germans who took a leading part in overcoming these crises and creating new harmony and stability. I need only name Albertus Magnus after Greek thought had invaded the medieval intellectual world; Leibniz after the upheavals the Thirty Years' War



and the sudden progress in natural science had brought into European thought; Kant after the moral and religious disintegration caused by the Enlightenment; Hegel after the earthquakes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period.

(4) "THE GERMANS HATE ENGLAND"

That is sheer nonsense. Of course, there have been times in which many Germans regarded the English with antipathy and even with hatred, for instance during the years of the Boer War, the Great War, and today. In all these cases it was natural for them to do so. And even when, during such periods, they wrote poems or declarations of hatred for England, these were generally far more harmless than what you or Morgenthau or Ilya Ehrenburg have been producing in the way of hatred for Germany. Moreover, many Germans did not approve of this hatred for England; and it was also quickly forgotten again by the others as soon as the excitement which had caused it died down. For the German has felt a certain admiration for the successful cousin on the other side of the Channel, and the only two wars he has fought against the English, the Great War and the present one, were declared on him by the latter.

(5) "THE GERMANS KNOW NO COMPROMISE"

There is some truth in this reproach. On the whole, the German has an urge for the absolute. He is more inclined to look at things in their absolute significance than in relation to changing circumstances. I grant you that the resulting distaste for compromises can be a disadvantage in politics—perhaps more for the Germans themselves than for the others. But in this, too, the Germans are not alone. Who was it who invented the thesis of "unconditional surrender," which represents the acme of uncompromisingness?

(6) "THE GERMANS ARE DISHONEST"

I was particularly interested in your arguments contained in the chapter "The World's Biggest Swindle," in which you discuss the German policy after Versailles. For, in contrast to many other chapters in which you merely give vent to your emotions, you come forward here with a lot of figures and facts. Your argument runs more or less as follows:

Germany being to blame for the war, it was up to her to make good the debts of the Allies. The war cost the Allies 480 billion marks. But in their inexcusable magnanimity they demanded no more than about a quarter from Germany. By all kinds of fraud, Germany got out of this obligation and, moreover, was brazen enough to borrow immense sums of money—allegedly to pay for her reparation debts—from abroad and not to pay them

back later on. To complete the tragedy of poor victorious England, the United States insisted upon a repayment of the money loaned to England during the war.

A full repudiation of your statistical acrobatics (which are impressive enough to anyone not acquainted with the facts) would require an equally long chapter. So I must be satisfied with correcting a few of your errors.

Germany concluded the armistice on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points, in which there was no mention of any German war guilt. Only after she had disarmed was she forced at Versailles to put her signature to Article 231, which proclaimed Germany's responsibility for the war. The German people never acknowledged this responsibility and hence never accorded any moral foundation to Article 232, which demanded reparations on the basis of the war-guilt theory. Nevertheless, they endeavored to fulfill the indemnity obligations forced upon them as far as was possible. These were fixed in 1921 at 132 billion marks (including interest accruing within 42 years: 226 billion marks). It was not love of Germany but anxiety for the further existence of the capitalistic economic system that made international financial experts such as Dawes, Young, Hoover, Gilbert, and Wiggan demand a reduction of the reparation payments; and finally, under the impact of the world economic crisis which arose out of the chaos largely produced by the reparation payments, the would-be creditor nations had to agree to their complete cessation. The best proof that reparation payments à la Versailles are an impossibility is provided by the fact that in the present Allied discussions about the postwar world not even the most rabid Germanophobes have mentioned their new application.

Just the same, the amount Germany had already paid by the time reparation payments were canceled was not to be sneezed at, even though, in view of the discrepancy in the valuation of the goods supplied by Germany, no accord could be reached as to its total.

**Total Amount of German Reparation Payments 1919-1931**

	(in billion marks)
Official German estimate	67.6
According to Varga (Soviet economist)	40.0
" " US Institute of Economics	38.2
" " H.G. Moulton (US economist)	23.1
Official French estimate	21.3

Now you write: even the little that Germany paid was paid out of loans given to her from abroad. But what else do you suggest Germany should have done? She was utterly impoverished by the war. According to your own statements, she spent 240 billions, i.e., half as much as all the Allies put together, on the war. After Versailles she possessed neither gold nor foreign-currency reserves from which she might have paid reparations. The inflation

of the twenties had deprived the German middle classes of their savings of generations. Nor did Germany have any income from foreign trade, as the world shut out German goods by means of high customs barriers (from 1924 to 1931 the German trade balance showed a deficit of 6.3 billion marks).

So Germany could only pay reparations from loans made her at the extraordinarily high average rate of interest of more than 6 per cent. As a result, while her political debts originating from reparations were reduced from year to year in conformity with the German payments, her commercial debts from loans taken up to pay reparations rose. Some of the pertinent data are lacking here in Shanghai, but the following figures give an approximate idea of the developments:

At the time of the Hoover moratorium, Germany had commercial debts amounting to 21 billions. The end of reparations enabled Germany to discontinue taking up new loans and to begin paying back the old ones. During the next eight years up to the outbreak of the present war, Germany's foreign debts declined to 6 billion marks (11 billions were repaid, 4 billions saved by the devaluation of the pound and the dollar carried out by your country and the USA). These would also have been repaid in the course of the next few years if your Government had not declared war upon Germany. If you bear in mind that Germany's creditors got more than 6 per cent interest on these loans instead of the much lower rates then customary for domestic loans in America and Britain, and that the world economic crisis entirely wiped out numerous investments in your countries, particularly in the USA, the German loans were still good business for your financiers, even taking into account the nonrepayment of the last 6 billions, for which Germany is not to blame. And, finally, what right have you to accuse Germany of dishonesty in this respect when your own country, which took up 4.3 billion dollars (including interest: \$11.1 billion) in America to finance the Great War, ceased all further payments after having paid back only 1.9 billion dollars? (*New York Times*, 20.11.32).

You get very angry because the Germans, so you say, assessed the value of goods supplied too high in their calculation of reparation payments made. This is a purely theoretical question which was of no influence on the cessation of reparations. But I cannot entirely ignore your argument. You reproach the Germans, for instance, for having included German private property in foreign countries which had been confiscated by the Allies. But there was nothing wrong in that. During the Great War, when the ideas of right and wrong were not yet so confused as they are now, the confiscation of private property corresponded so little to the general conception of interna-

tional law that the United States, for example, later returned the confiscated property to its German owners.

You are particularly angered by the tonnage problem. We all know that after Versailles the Allies took away all German ships of more than 1,600 tons and many smaller ones too. Part of these ships, which had been valued by the Germans in 1913 at 400 million marks, were, much to your annoyance, "generously" assessed at 711 million marks by the Reparations Commission. But actually there was no question of generosity. The shortage in tonnage brought about by the war was at that time so great that prices for ships had risen much higher than that. But the acme in German baseness is in your opinion the following: while the Germans built for themselves a brand-new merchant fleet after the war, "ridiculously overvalued antiquities were foisted upon the British merchant fleet" (p. 162). Well, the British shipowners are not exactly babes in the wood. They are not likely to have paid the British Government any "fraudulently overvalued" prices and, if they did, it is up to them to settle that with the British Government. The fact, however, that the Germans built *new* ships to replace those that had been taken from them is—I agree with you in this—the height of villainy. The makers of Versailles should have remembered to include a paragraph: "The Germans may only build *old* ships."

#### (7) "THE GERMANS HAVE NO SENSE OF HUMOR"

Every nation has its own brand of humor, and it is silly to accuse another nation of not having any just because you do not understand that particular type of humor. You may find it hard to believe, but I have known quite a few Americans who were as bored by an issue of *Punch* as some Englishmen are by a *New Yorker*.

#### (8) "THE OTHERS ARE DIFFERENT"

In the course of your forty years of anti-German activities you have been told so often—so you write in your chapter "A Nation Accused"—that other nations, too, including the English, are not entirely blameless that you wish once and for all to remove this bothersome argument. So you simply declare categorically that you are merely discussing Germany's misdeeds, not the "unfortunate events occurring in the dim past" of other nations (p. 295). But, pardon me, why? If you only attacked Hitler, one could understand your concentrating on him alone. But you turn against the German people and state specifically: "It is absolutely necessary to isolate Germany's past like a bacillus and to examine it carefully under the microscope." (p. 301)

Although I can well understand that you do not care to examine the history of your own

country under the microscope, you for your part must understand that the one-sidedness of your bacteriological studies looks somewhat suspicious. Of course, your reasons are obvious. In placing only Germany's history under the microscope, you can point with righteous indignation to the fact that Germany has been involved in six wars in the 130 years since the Vienna Congress. But if you were to direct your microscope at England's history as well, you would have to report that, during the same 130 years, the English conducted seventeen wars, viz., in addition to the two world wars, one each against Russia, the Boers, the Indians, Ethiopia, and the Sudan, two against Afghanistan and Egypt, and three each against China and Burma, not to mention minor wars of intervention or "pacification."

England is known for her presumptuous desire to be the judge of good and evil over other peoples. She is always inclined to regard whatever happens to fit into her own policy as *the* right thing and to represent it as that to the world with the aid of her large, efficient propaganda apparatus. It is always her endeavor to calumniate whoever happens to be England's enemy as *the* enemy of mankind, no matter whether it is France, Russia, Germany, or, in former centuries, Spain or Holland. Yet this extremely subjective judgment of other nations, dictated as it is by purely English interests, has rarely been presented in English literature in so crude and exaggerated a manner as in your book.

With praiseworthy honesty, you yourself admit the subjectivity and relativity of your judgment of other nations. You mention the reproach of an English professor to the effect that everything you have written about the Germans as the eternal disturbers of Europe's peace was written fifty years ago by a far greater historian, Bishop William Stubbs, about the French. And you reply: "Many, among them myself, have long realized that France. . .

was no longer a first-class power. . . . The idea of attacking other countries was an absurdity for this nation with its declining vitality and its senile desires. For that reason [the wars of aggression of] Louis XIV and Napoleon have no place in a modern discussion. France has changed, has become better and weaker. Germany has changed, has become stronger and worse." (p. 298)

Here you have provided us with your definition of good and bad. Good nations are those which are weak and dance to your tune; bad nations are those which are strong and do not wish to live in your shadow.

That is probably also the reason why you refrain from indicating by even so much as a word how you envisage the re-education of the German people which you demand so emphatically. "Re-education" means to you "weakening." You would like to weaken Germany to such an extent that in another ten or twenty years an Englishman could say: "The Russians have become stronger and worse, the Germans, however, weaker and better."

Far be it from me to contend that the Germans are infallible. There is much in their history which they themselves regret and would prefer to undo. But all the arguments you produce against Germany either do not hold good at all or do not apply exclusively to the Germans. In many essential points, even National Socialism is not specifically German but only part of the twentieth-century trend affecting the whole world—in forms variously adapted to the countries concerned. But to understand this it is essential to have a broad viewpoint of the developments of our age. I am afraid that your forty years of staring through the anti-German microscope have deprived you of this faculty.

Yours truly,

Klaus Mehnert.

### *News gets around . . .*

#### **The Fall of Antwerp, November 1914.**

When the fall of Antwerp got known, the church bells were rung [meaning in Germany]. (*Koelnische Zeitung*)

According to the *Koelnische Zeitung*, the clergy of Antwerp were compelled to ring the church bells when the fortress was taken. (*Le Matin*)

According to what *Le Matin* has heard from Cologne, the Belgian priests who refused to ring the church bells when Antwerp was taken have been driven away from their places. (*The Times*)

According to what *The Times* has heard from Cologne via Paris, the unfortunate Belgian priests who refused to ring the church bells when Antwerp was taken have been sentenced to hard labour. (*Corriere della Sera*)

According to information to the *Corriere della Sera* from Cologne via London, it is confirmed that the barbaric conquerors of Antwerp punished the unfortunate Belgian priests for their heroic refusal to ring the church bells by hanging them as living clappers to the bells with their heads down. (*Le Matin*)

(From Lord A. Ponsonby's *Falsehood in War-Time*)